

EKUSHEY BOOK FAIR

Ready for the show



Final touches being put to the stalls at the fair.

WAHIDA MITU

Although last year's fair seemed like yesterday, the Bangla Academy were putting final touches to the preparations of the annual month-long Amar Ekushey Book Fair to be inaugurated by Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia at 2:30 pm today.

The fair coincides with Shaheed Dibash celebrations and International Mother Language Day.

Tight security measures, as always have been taken by the Academy to ensure the safety of dignitaries and visitors alike, with an addition of 16 close circuit television cameras (CCTV) to constantly monitor the fair premises and its surroundings.

"We have set up separate exit and entrance gates to avoid congestions, with the entry gate consisting of three queues for visitors' convenience," said Murshid Anwar, the academy's assistant director of the co-ordination and public relations department.

Publishers expressed their satisfaction with the security measure taken.

"Security measures are satisfactory, and we expect no harassment to the visitors in guise of security checks. We expect visitors' co-operation to maintain security," said Monirul Haque, publisher of Ananya Prakashani.

Publishers will be permitted to display and sell their individual publications in this year's

fair and will not be allowed to display and sell books of other publishers. A committee has been formed to enforce the restriction and will be alert to untoward incidents as in the previous years.

"We will strictly enforce this rule and take stern action against violators," said Anwar.

Publishers are worried whether the fair authorities would be able to maintain the rule. "If they are ready to enforce and maintain such rules, steps must be taken before the inauguration and not after the fair is open to all," said another leading publisher, preferring anonymity.

The fair will house 461 stalls of 305 organisations this year whereas the number of stalls was

464 of 318 organisations last year.

A high official of Bangla Academy said that publishers suggested a reduction in the number of stalls this year to avoid over-crowding.

But this suggestion could not be considered, as all publishers want individual stalls, said the official.

Participants were busy preparing their own stalls till last evening.

Another academy official said that the chaos among the participating publishers regarding the ownership of the stalls was solved.

"Of the participants who were involved in the ownership chaos, some had not even applied for a stall, let alone getting one through lottery," he

said. "Some managed to get a stall by negotiation and political influence, but ended up in blaming the academy for all the chaos," he added.

But Anwar, the assistant director said it was just a misunderstanding that has now been cleared.

This year Bangla Academy will not give an award to a well-presented stall, but three books based on theme, structure and sales will receive awards.

This year publishers will receive 30 percent as commissions on the sale of each book. Previous years' commission was only 25 percent.

The fair will be opened to visitors from 3:00 to 9:00 pm on weekdays and 11:00 am to 9:00 pm on holidays. But will be open from 8:00 am to 9:00 pm on February 21.

Forged certificates worry parents

FAIZUL KHAN TANIM

Frauds are producing fake certificates of education using latest technology and selling those to dishonest students with poor academic records applying for higher studies or job.

Sources said the frauds charge Tk 2,000 to Tk 4,000 for making a fake SSC/HSC certificate and Tk 5,000 or more for an O/A Level certificate (before 2001).

The recent seizure of a huge number of such certificates in the city by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police and the rampant practice of forgery has troubled the parents.

Students who are not academically sound are buying these fake Ordinary (O), Advanced (A) Level certificates, Secondary School Certificate (SSC), Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC), bachelors and masters certificates of the public universities.

Anwar Islam, a university student, said: "Previously such certificates were available only in Nilkhet area but now these are produced in other places. Anyone who has the knowledge of graphics and expertise in handling computers and required software can make these."

Producing these certificates has become very easy with the availability of high quality scanners, printers and papers, and computers with high-end software like Adobe Photoshop, Corel Draw and more, said students from Nilkhet area.

Rab sources said they recently arrested two people along with 60,000 fake certificates and mark sheets of different universities and education boards in the city.

A team of Rab-10 raided a house at Rasulpur in Dania and seized the certificates and mark sheets. They arrested Sheikh Abdur Rab and Sheikh Arikul Islam for possessing these.

A student said the certificates of O/A Levels from years before 2001 are being counterfeited as the certificates coming after that year have special hologram and a mark. It is not possible to counterfeit these certificates with special security features.

Another student said he managed to go abroad for higher studies in 2001 producing a laminated fake certificate. In the wake of the rampant certificate forgery, most of the foreign educational institutions stopped accepting laminated certificates after 2002-03, he said.

Sources said the frauds, mostly working in computer shops, are making the

The recent seizure of a huge number of such certificates in the city by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and police and the rampant practice of forgery has troubled the parents

certificates secretly to avoid arrest. "We make fake certificate when any student ask for it. But we no longer make the fake documents in our workplaces as it is risky. Computers, printers and scanners are carried to a safe place or the student's residence to work in privacy," one of the frauds said.

He said they fetch more money from producing O/A Level certificates as the students of English medium schools are from richer families compared to SSC and HSC students.

Describing the mechanism of producing such certificates, he said: "At first, the colour of the certificate paper is identified and a piece of paper having the same size and shape of the original certificate is printed with that color to make a dummy paper. Then designs from the original certificate are scanned and superimposed on the dummy paper after color matching."

Sources from Dhaka University said that the controller of examinations of DU received about 200 letters in regard to fake certificates from 16 universities in Canada, United Kingdom, United States, New Zealand and Australia through their diplomatic missions in Dhaka in 2003.

A number of embassy and high commission officials requesting anonymity said they have stopped accepting laminated certificates as these certificates have more possibility of being fake. To qualify for a visa, students now have to submit documents without lamination.

Senior residents said the local education boards and universities should be totally computerised and they should preserve digital data of records and transcripts of the students to stop such forgery of educational certificates. The certificates should be made with special security features so that the frauds cannot counterfeit them, they suggested.

NAZRUL INSTITUTE

In desperate need of funds

SHARMIN MEHRIBAN

Dearth of funds and inadequate manpower are hampering the activities of Nazrul Institute, an organisation established with the objective to preserve the memory, literary works and personal belongings of Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet.

The institute was founded in 1985 at a house, which was allotted by the government to Nazrul when he was brought in from Calcutta in 1972. At that stage he was suffering from an illness due to which he could not speak, said Abdul Hai Shikder, executive director of the institute.

The institute has a sales centre, museum, audiovisual room, library, auditorium and a room for recitation of Nazrul's poems and singing of his songs. Books, CDs and audiocassettes containing songs and poems of Nazrul, some of them in his own voice, are available for sale at the sales centre. Translated versions are available in English, Latin and French.

Abdus Salam, a technician who was sitting at the sales centre as the person in charge was on leave, said that a Chinese researcher translated selected poems of Nazrul into Chinese

language.

He said there have been no orders from local English medium schools for the English translations of Nazrul's literary works. When asked why, Shikder said: "The students in these schools do not even know their own history."

Nazrul's bedroom has been made a museum. A pile of dust lay on the shelf above the basin due to poor maintenance. "There are only two sweepers who also have to work as peons," said an artist who looks after the museum along with a photographer in separate shifts.

He said this is his additional duty as his job is to design sets for cultural programmes.

Paintings, photographs, gramophone records, photocopies of Nazrul's handwritten poems, newspaper clippings of his works when they were first published and some medical documents are displayed in the museum. The photographs that were donated by various individuals following advertisements in the newspapers are laminated and pasted on cardboards.

Several artists at their own will drew the paintings. A particular painting displays a sequence from Nazrul's poem "Lichu

chor". The artist admitted that the authorities did not give him any background information prior to entrusting him with the responsibility of looking after the museum. Consequently, he cannot answer all of the visitors' queries such as the source of a document that said "Trustees of the London Clinic Limited".

"Apart from my designated post, I also have to work as an

Although the institute has a research room, there is no researcher. The audiovisual room is unused as there is no equipment for recording. "If we had the necessary equipment, we would not have to rent studios for recording songs," said Salam.

Some of the employees, on condition of anonymity, accused the authorities of neglecting the

to recruit people in the vacant posts and for introducing a pension scheme for the existing employees. These are still under consideration. "If there is a pension scheme for the staff then it would help improve their efficiency," he added.

Shikder focused on the financial inadequacy of the institute. "It has been a few months since I joined this institute but I have

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assistant librarian and a peon," said Tamanna Anwar, the library attendant.

Her work involves attending to the needs of visitors, buying and selecting books, visiting various organisations, collecting information from various newspapers and even cleaning the shelves. "I have to ask a visitor to look after the library in case I need to go to the toilet," she added.

institute. "We do not expect the government to provide adequate financial assistance to the institute as we ourselves are unable to be efficient in our work because of a lack of adequate manpower, stalled promotion process and absence of pension schemes," said an employee.

Shikder said that a prayer has been sent to the government a few months back for permission

already sent an application to the ministry for an increase in the current annual budget by Tk 3 million.

"We have only one broken microbus that remains unused most of the time. If we had more transport, we could bring school-children to visit this institute and also visit our project site in Dorirampur in Mymensingh," he added.



The Nazrul Institute building at Dhanmondi.